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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/928,918	08/13/2001	John Paulson	PAULJO-4	8046

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EXAMINER

MITCHELL, KATHERINE W

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3677

DATE MAILED: 12/20/2002

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/928,918

Applicant(s)

PAULSON, JOHN

Examiner

Katherine W Mitchell

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-8 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-8 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 31 August 2001 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on ____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). ____. |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) <u>5</u> . | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Drawings

1. This application has been filed with informal drawings which are acceptable for examination purposes only. Formal drawings will be required if the application is allowed.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

2. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

3. Claims 3, 5 and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.
4. Regarding claims 3, 5, and 8, alternatives should be presented as a Markush group to avoid ambiguity. A Markush Group and its application are discussed in the MPEP Paragraph 2173.05(h).

I. MARKUSH GROUPS

Alternative expressions are permitted if they present no uncertainty or ambiguity with respect to the question of scope or clarity of the claims. One acceptable form of alternative expression, which is commonly referred to as a Markush group, recites members as being "selected from the group consisting of A, B and C." See *Ex parte Markush*, 1925 C.D. 126 (Comm'r Pat. 1925).

Ex parte Markush sanctions claiming a genus expressed as a group consisting of certain specified materials. Inventions in metallurgy, refractories, ceramics, pharmacy, pharmacology and biology are most frequently claimed under the Markush formula but purely mechanical features or process steps may also be claimed by using the Markush style of claiming. See *Ex parte Head*, 214 USPQ 551 (Bd. App. 1981); *In re Gaubert*, 524 F.2d 1222, 187 USPQ 664 (CCPA 1975); and *In re Harnisch*, 631 F.2d 716, 206 USPQ 300 (CCPA 1980). It is improper to use the term "comprising" instead of "consisting of." *Ex parte Dotter*, 12 USPQ 382 (Bd. App. 1931).

The use of Markush claims of diminishing scope should not, in itself, be considered a

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sufficient basis for objection to or rejection of claims. However, if such a practice renders the claims indefinite or if it results in undue multiplicity, an appropriate rejection should be made.

Similarly, the double inclusion of an element by members of a Markush group is not, in itself, sufficient basis for objection to or rejection of claims. Rather, the facts in each case must be evaluated to determine whether or not the multiple inclusion of one or more elements in a claim renders that claim indefinite. The mere fact that a compound may be embraced by more than one member of a Markush group recited in the claim does not necessarily render the scope of the claim unclear. For example, the Markush group, "selected from the group consisting of amino, halogen, nitro, chloro and alkyl" should be acceptable even though "halogen" is generic to "chloro."

The materials set forth in the Markush group ordinarily must belong to a recognized physical or chemical class or to an art-recognized class. However, when the Markush group occurs in a claim reciting a process or a combination (not a single compound), it is sufficient if the members of the group are disclosed in the specification to possess at least one property in common which is mainly responsible for their function in the claimed relationship, and it is clear from their very nature or from the prior art that all of them possess this property. While in the past the test for Markush-type claims was applied as liberally as possible, present practice which holds that claims reciting Markush groups are not generic claims (MPEP § 803) may subject the groups to a more stringent test for propriety of the recited members. Where a Markush expression is applied only to a portion of a chemical compound, the propriety of the grouping is determined by a consideration of the compound as a whole, and does not depend on there being a community of properties in the members of the Markush expression.

When materials recited in a claim are so related as to constitute a proper Markush group, they may be recited in the conventional manner, or alternatively. For example, if "wherein R is a material selected from the group consisting of A, B, C and D" is a proper limitation, then "wherein R is A, B, C or D" shall also be considered proper.

Subgenus Claim

Genus, subgenus, and Markush-type claims, if properly supported by the disclosure, are all acceptable ways for applicants to claim their inventions. They provide different ways to present claims of different scope. Examiners should therefore not reject Markush-type claims merely because there are genus claims that encompass the Markush-type claims. See also MPEP § 608.01(p) and § 715.03.

5. Regarding claim 5, the phrase "membrane-like" renders the claim(s) indefinite because the claim(s) include(s) elements not actually disclosed (those encompassed by "like"), thereby rendering the scope of the claim(s) unascertainable. See MPEP § 2173.05(d).

6. Claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite in that it fails to point out what is included or excluded by the claim language. This claim is an omnibus type claim.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

7. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

8. Claims 1 and 4-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Forsberg US Patent 4914876.

Re claim 1: Forsberg teaches a pad (353) comprising resilient material capable of being disposed between block layers in a wall, capable of transferring tensile load from a geosynthetic soil reinforcing material to the wall block face in col 8 lines 42-61 and Figs. 27 and 28.

Re claims 4 and 6-8: Forsberg teaches a pad (353) comprising resilient material with a thickness sufficient to substantially fill voids and uneven surfaces between adjacent horizontal surfaces of retaining blocks in Fig. 27. Note that col 8 lines 42-61 teach that the pad 353 further anchors the wall and helps maintain the block positioning. Flexible sheets between blocks inherently reduce cracking due to the thickness and compressibility of the sheet. As claim 8 is best understood, the pad of Forsberg improves system efficiency as described in col 8 lines 42-61 and Figs. 27 and 28.

Re claim 5: Forsberg teaches a polymeric membrane planar pad in col 8 lines 42-61 and Figs. 27 and 28.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

9. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

10. Claim 2 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Forsberg US Patent 4914878 in view of Blanc US Patent 2687034. Forsberg, as discussed above, teaches a resilient pad between horizontal layers of blocks. However, Forsberg does not specify that the pad should be shaped to approximately match the horizontal surface of the blocks. Blanc teaches a resilient pad between horizontal layers of blocks shaped to approximately match the horizontal surface of the blocks. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified Forsberg to include a resilient pad shaped to approximately match the horizontal surface of the blocks as taught by Blanc in order to ensure that the contact surfaces are covered without wasting material, if the pad is needed to serve as a gasket.

11. Claim 2 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Forsberg US Patent 4914878 in view of Brown et al. US Patent 3813838. Forsberg, as discussed above, teaches a resilient pad between horizontal layers of blocks. However, Forsberg does not specify that the pad should be shaped to approximately match the horizontal surface of the blocks. Brown et al. teaches a resilient pad between horizontal layers of

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blocks shaped to approximately match the horizontal surface of the blocks. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified Forsberg to include a resilient pad shaped to approximately match the horizontal surface of the blocks as taught by Brown et al. in order to ensure that the contact surfaces are covered without wasting material, if the pad is needed to serve as a gasket.

12. Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Forsberg US Patent 4914878 in view of Firnkas US Patent 3691708. Forsberg, as discussed above, teaches a resilient pad between horizontal layers of blocks. However, Forsberg does not teach specific materials. Firnkas teaches a resilient gasket, for use between blocks, of vinyl chloride polymers and copolymers or materials with similar properties of flexibility, durability, resilience, and toughness in col 4 lines 3-16. Therefore, it would have been considered obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time the invention was made, to have selected polyvinyl chloride for the resilient material of the pad as taught by Firnkas, since it has been held to be within the general skill of a worker in the art to select a known material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use as a matter of obvious design choice. *In re Leshin*, 125 USPQ 416.

13. Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Forsberg US Patent 4914878 in view of Amata US Patent 5045377. Forsberg, as discussed above, teaches a resilient pad between horizontal layers of blocks. However, Forsberg does not teach specific materials. Amata teaches a resilient geogrid, for use in soil retention and reinforcement systems, which can be made of PVC or punched

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nonwovens in col 2 lines 39-60. Therefore, it would have been considered obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time the invention was made, to have selected polyvinyl chloride or needlepunched geotextiles for the resilient material of the pad as taught by Amata, since it has been held to be within the general skill of a worker in the art to select a known material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use as a matter of obvious design choice. *In re Leshin*, 125 USPQ 416.

Conclusion


14. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Katherine W Mitchell whose telephone number is 703-305-6713. The examiner can normally be reached on Tues-Fri 9 AM - 7:30 PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, J. J. Swann can be reached on 703-306-4115. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are 703-305-7687 for regular communications and 703-308-8623 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-308-1113.

kwm
December 14, 2002


J. J. SWANN
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3600